Categories of Otherness in the Discursive Construction of National Identity During an Internal Conflict: Turks and Politically Organized Kurds in the Print Media

Ahmet Cevdet Aşkın[1]

Abstract

This article examines how Turkish national identity and otherness have been constructed in mainstream print media in Turkey during the ongoing ethnic conflict. The study applies critical discourse analysis to a sample of 449 news articles published in three leading mainstream dailies, Hürriyet, Milliyet, and Sabah, during a month of intensifying conflict between Turkish security forces and PKK militants in 2015. I identify five forms of discourse used to discursively construct national identity and otherness: military-legal, national-symbolic, cultural-ethical, dramatic-emotional, and ethnic. Together, these discourses construct a Turkish national identity while reinforcing the 'other' as illegitimate, non-national, unethical, inhumane, and non-Turk.

Keywords: *Kurdish question; PKK; critical discourse analysis; ethnic conflict; print media*

Abstract in Kurmanji

Kategoriyên yêdinbûnê di avakirina gotarî ya nasnameya netewî de dema pevçûnên navxweyî: tirk û kurdên bi awayê polîtîk rêkxistî di medyaya çapbûyî de

Ev gotar analîz dike ka çawa nasnameya neteweyî ya tirk û yêdinbûn di medyaya çapbûyî ya navendî de hatiye avakirin di dema pevçûnên etnîkî yên berdewam de. Ev xebat analîza dîskûrê/gotarî ya rexneyî tetbîq dike li ser 449 nimûneyên nûçeyên çapbûyî yên ji teref sê rojnameyên navendî yên sereke Hürriyet, Milliyet û Sabahê di meheke pevçûnên giran ên navbera hêzên ewlehiyê yên tirk û mîlîtanên PKKê ya sala 2015an de. Ez pênc formên dîskûrê pênase dikim ku di avakirina dîskûrî ya nasnameya netewî û yêdinbûnê de hatine bikaranîn: leşkerî-legal, netewî-sembolîk, kulturî-etîkî/exlaqî, dramatîk-hestî û etnîkî. Ev dîskûr bi hev re nasnameyeke netewî ya tirkî ava dikin ligel xurtkirina 'yêdin' wekî xeyrîmeşrû, ne-netewî, ne-exlaqî, ne-însanî û ne-tirk.

Abstract in Sorani

پۆلێنەکانی جیاوازیکردن لە بنیاتنانی گوتاری ناسنامەی نەتەوەیی لە کاتی ململانێیەکی ناوخۆییدا: تورک و کوردی سیاسی ڕێکخراو لە میدیای چاپکراودا

ئەم بابەتە لە چۆنیەتی بنیادنانی ناسنامەی نەتەوەیی و ئەوپتری تورک لە میدیای چاپکراوی سەرەکی لە تورکیادا دەکۆڵێتەوە، لە کاتی ململانێی بەردەوامی نەژادی دا. توێژینەوەکە شیکاری گوتاری ڕەخنەگەرانە بەکاردەهێنێت لەسەر نموونەیەک لە چوارسەد و چل و نۆ بابەتی هەواڵ، کە لە سێ ڕۆژنامەی سەرەکی (حوڕییەت، میللەت و سەباح)، لە ماوەی مانگێک لە ململانێی چڕی نێوان هێزە ئەمنییەکانی تورکیا و چەکدارانی پەکەکەدا، لە ساڵی ٢٠١٥ دا بڵاوکراونەتەوە. من پێنج فۆرمی گوتارم دەستنیشان کردووە کە بەکارهێنراون بۆ بنیاتنانی گوتاری ناسنامەی نەتەوەیی و ئەوپتربوون: سەربازی-یاسایی، نەتەوەیی-سیمبوولی، کەلتووری-ئەخلاقی، دراماتیک-سۆزداری و نەژادی. پێکەوە، ئەم گوتارانە ناسنامەیەکی نەتەوەیی تورکی دروست دەکەن، وە

---

[1] Dr. Ahmet Cevdet Aşkın, Independent researcher based in Turkey. E-mail: ahmetcevdetaskin@gmail.com

له هەمان کاتدا دەبنەهۆی بەهێزکردنیی گوتاری 'ئەوی دیکە' وەک ناشەرعی، نانەتەوەیی، نائەخلاقی، نامرۆڤانە و تورک نەبوو.

Abstract in Zazaki

Viraştişê nasnameyê neteweyî yo vatişkî yê wextê pêrodayîşê zereyî de kategorîyê wetênî: çapemenîye de tirk û kurdê rêxistinanê sîyasîyan

Na meqale analîz kena ke wextê pêrodayîşê etnîkî de çapemenîya Tirkîya ya bingeyêne de wetênî û nasnameyê tirkan o neteweyî senî ameyê viraştene. Cigêrayîş pê analîzê dîskûrsî yo rexnegir qayîte 449 nuşteyanê xeberan keno ke mengêka serra 2015î de hetê hîrê rojnameyanê serekeyan Hürriyet, Milliyet û Sabah ra derheqê pêrodayîşê giranî yê mabênê hêzanê asayîşê tirkan û mîlîtananê PKK de weşanîyayî. Ez panc tewiranê dîskûrsî tesbît kena ke munaqeşeyan de semedê viraştişê wetênî û nasnameyê neteweyî ra ameyî xebitnayene: leşkerîyo qanûnî, neteweyîyo sembolîk, kulturîyo etîk, dramatîko zerrîzîz û etnîkkî. Pêro pîya, nê dîskûrsî yew nasnameyê tirkan o neteweyî virazenê û giranî danê ser ke "ê bînî" sey nemeşrû, bêneteweyî, neetîk, bêînsaf û netirk bêrê musnayene.

Introduction: Ongoing conflict and battlefield of the discourses

After World War I, the fall of the Ottoman Empire left a political vacuum in the Kurdish-inhabited lands in southeastern Anatolia and northern Iraq. The Lausanne Treaty, signed on 24 July 1923, formalized the *de facto* division of Kurdish-inhabited lands among Turkey, Syria, and Iraq, ushering in decades of turbulence for the Kurds in this region.[2] Chaliand characterizes the colonial re-partitioning of the Middle East following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire as the Kurds' misfortune.[3] McDowall thinks that the Kurds only really began to think and act as an ethnic community after World War I.[4] Therefore, the 'Kurdish question' in a broader sense emerged after 1918. This article concerns the discursive construction of a dominant identity through otherness categories in Turkey.

Although the terminologies vary, scholars across multiple fields generally accept that Kurdish ethnic identity has been a political, social, and cultural issue in Turkey since the foundation of the Republic in 1923. The roots of the 'Kurdish problem', which occasionally takes the form of armed rebellions against the central government, go back to the Ottoman Empire.[5] According to Yayman, there have been 29 Kurdish rebellions against the central governments since 1806, of which nine occurred in the Ottoman period.[6] However, Çandar argues there have only been four major Kurdish armed uprisings that can properly be called rebellions since the Turkish Republic's foundation in 1923. The first three, in 1925, 1930 and 1937, were all led by either religious figures or tribal chieftains, and the PKK (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*, Kurdistan Worker's Party) initiated the most recent one in 1984.[7]

Yeğen summarizes the different approaches to the Kurdish question in Turkey. In the first half of the twentieth century, it was generally conceptualized as a fatal rivalry between the

---

[2] Othman Ali, "The Kurds and the Lausanne peace negotiations, 1922-23", *Middle Eastern Studies* 33 no. 3 (1997): 521.

[3] Gerard Chaliand, ed. *People without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan*, trans. Michael Palis (London: Zed Press, 1980), 11.

[4] David MacDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 4.

[5] Barış Ünlü, *Türklük Sözleşmesi: Oluşumu, İşleyişi ve Krizi* (Ankara: Dipnot, 2018); Büşra Ersanlı, Günay Göksu Özdoğan, Nesrin Uçarlar, *Türkiye Siyasetinde Kürtler: Direniş, Hak Arayışı, Katılım* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2012); Hamit Bozaslan, *La question kurde: États et minorites au Moyen-Orient* (Paris: Tallandier, 2013); İsmail Beşikçi, *Devletlerarası Sömürge Kürdistan* (İstanbul: Alan, 1999); Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London: Zed Press, 1992); Mesut Yeğen, *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1999), *Müstakbel Türk'ten Sözde Vatandaşa: Cumhuriyet ve Kürtler* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2014).

[6] Hüseyin Yayman, *Şark Meselesinden Demokratik Açılıma: Türkiye'nin Kürt Sorunu Hafızası* (Ankara: SETA, 2011), 54-55.

[7] Cengiz Çandar, *Turkey's Mission Impossible: War and Peace with the Kurds* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020), 151.

backward, pre-modern and tribal past and the prosperous present. In the 1950s and 60s, it was perceived as a tension between the peripheral economy and national market. Later, in the 1970s, Kurdish unrest was understood to be a communist incitement. Since the collapse of the Soviet Bloc in the 1990s, it has been seen as a matter of ethnic revival and separatism.[8] İçduygu, Romano, and Sirkeci assert that this revival is the result of the material and non-material insecurity of the Kurdish population in Turkey.[9] This insecurity is arguably not solely a Turkish problem, as Kurds today are minorities in Turkey, Iran, Syria, and Iraq. According to Sheyholislami, although Kurds form part of the four different social and political systems, a cross-border or trans-state Kurdish identity has been growing since the beginning of the 1980s.[10] This change has inevitably alarmed the sovereign states, including Turkey, and provoked them into harsh measures to control it. As a result, social tensions have increased and paved the way for armed conflicts. The PKK, which has, next to Turkey, organisational footprints in Iran, Iraq, and Syria as well, is one of the prominent actors in this process. O'Connor argues that the PKK insurgency has been a major factor in the strengthening of Kurdish identity to today's level.[11] This conflict should be defined as a trans-state ethnic conflict, as it also affects the Kurds living in Syria, Iran, and Iraq.[12]

Currently, vast areas stretching from northern and eastern Syria to northern Iraq are the site of well-prepared and organised military operations conducted by Turkey, Iraq, and the Kurdistan Regional Government. For success, a military operation must be legitimate in the eyes of the people, and public discourses for and against such operations are important components of these struggles. Likewise, armed insurgent groups, too, seek to build legitimacy for the sake of their causes.[13] In conflicts with an ethnic dimension, this discursive struggle involves the construction/reconstruction of identities and otherness. This article examines how Turkish national identity and otherness have been constructed in the mainstream print media in Turkey in the context of the 'Kurdish problem'. In approaching this research question, it applies critical discourse analysis (CDA) to a sample of 449 articles published in three leading mainstream dailies, *Hürriyet*, *Milliyet* and *Sabah*, during a month of intensifying conflict in 2015. It concludes that Turkish national identity is constructed through otherness categories such as 'illegitimate', 'non-national', 'unethical', 'inhuman', and 'non-Turk', which are established through 'military-legal', 'national-symbolic', 'cultural-ethical', 'dramatic-emotional', and 'ethnic' discourses, respectively.

25 July 2015 is chosen as the beginning of the one-month study period, as that is the date on which the Turkish air force bombed the PKK camps in northern Iraq, ending almost two and a half years of truce. The bombing signalled the failure of the so-called peace talks, which had been initiated by the government in the first days of 2013, and gave rise to frustration in Turkish civil society, especially among the Kurds. According to Çandar, with the collapse of the peace process, the unprecedented hopes for a nonviolent resolution of the Kurdish

---

[8] Mesut Yeğen, "Turkish nationalism and the Kurdish question", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30 no. 1 (2007).

[9] Ahmet İçduygu, David Romano, İbrahim Sirkeci, "The ethnic question in an environment of insecurity: The Kurds in Turkey", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22 no. 6 (1999): 993.

[10] Jaffer Sheyholislami, *Kurdish Identity, Discourse, and New Media* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 47.

[11] Francis Patrick O'Connor, "Radical political participation and the internal Kurdish diaspora in Turkey", *Kurdish Studies* 3 no. 2 (2015): 167.

[12] Kemal Kirişci and Gareth M. Winrow, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-State Ethnic Conflict* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 26.

[13] Eric W. Schoon, "Building legitimacy: Interactional dynamics and the popular evaluation of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Turkey", *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 28 no. 4-5 (2017).

question in Turkey were lost, giving way to intense conflict.[14] Notably, the bombardment occurred as the ruling AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, Justice and Development Party) lost the majority in parliament due to the HDP's (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi*, Peoples' Democratic Party) success in the general elections on June 7.[15] Under these political and social conditions in general, the said military policy shift gave momentum to armed conflicts in the mountains and sparked armed street fights in several south-eastern towns such as Sur, Cizre, and Nusaybin as paramilitary forces connected with the PKK, originally called the YDG-H (*Yurtsever Devrimci Gençlik Hareketi*, Patriotic Movement of Revolutionary Youth), and later the YPS (*Yekîneyên Parastina Sîvîl*, Civil Defence Units) erected barricades and defended them for several months before being harshly suppressed. Bakan attempts to explain the dynamics of this urban conflict with reference to the dialectical relation between macro- and micro-level politics and suggests that socio-spatial dynamics comprised significant mechanisms that facilitated the conflict in Sur.[16]

Literature review

The current conflict in Turkey began on 15 August 1984, when the PKK simultaneously attacked Eruh and Şemdinli, two towns in south-eastern Turkey. Parallel to this ongoing conflict, there has been an extensive body of research on the Kurdish question in Turkey. In their review, Yeğen, Tol, and Çalışkan observe the breadth of this literature, which stretches from the significance of traditional social structures to the displacement of Kurds and the role of Kurdish women in resistance, and from the Turkish state's policies towards Kurds to the conflict-resolution process.[17] Ünver uses a discursive approach to compare how Turkish, European, and American legislatures construct the Kurdish question in their political debates.[18] Aktürk argues that counter elites, armed with a new discourse about the relationship of ethnicity to nationality, can change an ethnicity regime. The AKP's post-2009 reforms on the rights of linguistic minorities could be seen as symptomatic of a movement away from a policy of assimilation to one of multiculturalism.[19] However, in a recent study, Türkmen suggests that the AKP government's policies regarding the 'Kurdish problem' have become ethno-nationalist since the elections of 7 June 2015.[20] Despite the range of well-documented themes, the literature neglects some aspects of this conflict, including how the mainstream print media in Turkey has discursively represented Turkish national identity and otherness during the ongoing ethnic-based conflict. Two exceptions are Sezgin and Wall's examination of the media's representations of Kurds in Turkey based on a case study of *Hürriyet* newspaper[21] and Erdem's analysis of the representation of the Kurds and the pro-Kurdish DTP (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi*, Democratic Society Party) in mainstream Turkish

---

[14] Çandar, *Turkey's Mission Impossible: War and Peace with Kurds*, 421.

[15] Gönül Tol, "Turkey's endgame in Syria", *Foreign Affairs* (2019): 3, available at https://www.foreignaff airs.com/articles/turkey/2019-10-09/turkeys-endgame-syria (last accessed on 2-10-2022).

[16] Ronay Bakan, "Socio-spatial dynamics of contentious politics: A case of urban warfare in the Kurdish region of Turkey", *Kurdish Studies* 8 no. 2 (2020).

[17] Mesut Yeğen, Uğraş Ulaş Tol, Mehmet Ali Çalışkan, "Ethnicity and elections in eastern Turkey: What do the Kurds want?", *Contemporary Review of the Middle East* 7 no. 4 (2020).

[18] Hamid Akın Ünver, *Turkey's Kurdish Question. Discourse and Politics since 1990* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

[19] Şener Aktürk, *Regimes of Ethnicity and Nationhood in Germany, Russia, and Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[20] Gülay Türkmen, *Under the Banner of Islam.Turks, Kurds, and the Limits of Religious Unity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

[21] Dilara Sezgin and Melisa A. Wall, "Constructing the Kurds in the Turkish press: A case study of *Hürriyet* newspaper", *Media, Culture & Society* 27 no. 5 (2005).

media between 2008 and 2009.[22] In fact, while reporting on the armed struggle carried out by the PKK against the Turkish state and Kurdish demands for autonomy, the print media has discursively constructed and reinforced a Turkish national identity that is coterminous with the sovereign state through the marginalisation of various social groups and political and civic institutions. This article uses critical discourse analysis to identify and analyse the otherness categories used in the print media to construct Turkish national identity during this intense conflict.

Discourse and identity: A close relation

The term 'discourse' is used differently by scholars in linguistic and cultural studies. While German and Central European scholars make a distinction between 'text' and 'discourse', 'discourse' is often used for both written and oral texts in the English-language literature.[23] Talbot uses the term 'text' for the observable product of interactions, i.e., a cultural object, and 'discourse' for the process of interaction itself, i.e., a cultural activity. She suggests that "text is the fabric in which discourse is manifested, whether spoken or written, whether produced by one person or several. The distinction, then, is between product and process, between object and activity".[24]

For Foucault, the term 'discourse' means an institutionalized way of speaking or writing about reality, and it defines for the users what is worthy of being intelligibly thought and said about the world. In every society, the production of discourse is controlled, selected, organised, and distributed by specific procedures, including exclusion techniques. Accordingly, for Foucault, discourse is the thing for which and by which there is a struggle. In short, it is power to be seized.[25]

Combining linguistic and Foucauldian approaches, CDA formulates discourse as a form of social practice. As bodies of knowledge and practice that shape people, discourses give power to some and not others. They only exist in social interactions in specific situations.[26] In other words, "describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) which frame it: the discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them".[27]

Identity is constructed based on similarities and differences. Any identity, therefore, needs to be defined based on the 'other'. However, rather than a static social category, identity can be understood as a dynamic process situated in time, ever-changing.[28] It needs to be reconstructed and reinforced primarily through discourse. Sheyholislami notes that while identity constructs are not exclusively discursive, identities must be articulated in language and other semiosis and discursive constructs of identity must be disseminated and negotiated

[22] Derya Erdem, "The representation of the Democratic Society Party (DTP) in the mainstream Turkish media", in *The Kurdish Question in Turkey*, eds. Cengiz Gunes and Welat Zeydanlıoğlu (New York: Routledge, 2014).

[23] Gilbert Weiss and Ruth Wodak, *Critical Discourse Analysis* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 13.

[24] Mary Talbot, *Media Discourse: Representation and Interaction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 9.

[25] Michel Foucault, *L'ordre du discours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 18-20 .

[26] Talbot, *Media Discourse: Representation and Interaction,* 13.

[27] Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak, "Critical discourse analysis", in *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*, ed. Teun van Dijk (London: Sage, 1997), 258.

[28] Ruth Wodak, Rudolf de Cillia, Martin Riesigl, Karin Liebhart, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, trans. Angelika Hirsch, Richard Mitten, J. W. Unger (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 11.

among people.[29] The national identity of individuals who perceive themselves as belonging to a national collective is manifested in, among other things, their social practices, including their discursive practice.[30] This is a particular form of social practice and plays a central part in forming and expressing national identity. According to Billig, citizens are daily reminded of their identity, and small words, rather than grand memorable phrases offer constant, but barely conscious, reminders of the homeland, making 'our' national identity unforgettable.[31] For a member of an imagined collective, national identity is indeed a matter of construction of the 'other', the one from whom she/he considers herself/himself different and thanks to whom she/he reinforces being herself/himself. The categories of otherness used in this process can be constructed discursively through the media. The mainstream media provides a platform where this discourse is both produced and conveyed. Sheyholislami suggests that the media's discourse not only reinforces the national identity that is desired by the public, but also modifies, reshapes and rearticulates that identity.[32] Van Dijk, too, discusses the ideological and structural role of news media in the field of ethnic affairs; the media provide not only information and beliefs, but also a framework for interpreting this information.[33]

Arcan thinks that the news media can play a central role in escalating or reducing conflicts and violence by framing information.[34] Weiss and Wodak suggest that news texts are often sites of struggle in that they show traces of differing discourses and ideologies contending and struggling for dominance.[35] Therefore, a discursive construction of otherness that strengthens national identity is a struggle that plays out in news texts. From the establishment's perspective, representing an organisation that is endangering the national identity, whether through armed struggle or other means, as the 'other' could be considered a highly effective method for creating citizens' support for eliminating the danger.

Methodology

Qualitative methods are appropriate for the research outlined above, as they are interpretive and case oriented. A purposive sampling method was used to choose three of the mainstream daily newspapers published in Turkey: *Hürriyet*, *Milliyet,* and *Sabah*. Due to their circulation and credibility, they represent the research universe of mainstream Turkish newspapers. According to the Turkish Press Advertisement Agency data, the total circulation of 36 national dailies published in Turkey in July-August of 2015 was about 3,160,854 a day. The average daily circulations of *Hürriyet, Sabah*, and *Milliyet* are, respectively, 361,276, 318,458, and 147,801. *Hürriyet* and *Milliyet* have been in print for over 60 years, and *Sabah* has been published since 1985. The front page logos of *Hürriyet, Milliyet*, and *Sabah* include, respectively, the phrases 'Turkey belongs to the Turks', 'Trust in the Press', and 'Turkey's best newspaper'. As mainstream media outlets, their positions on national security issues are in line with the state's. They also served as the research universe in another study of the representation of Kurds in the mainstream print media.[36] The sample consists of all of the news stories about

[29] Sheyholislami, *Kurdish Identity, Discourse, and New Media*, 21.
[30] Wodak, de Cillia, Riesigl, Liebhart, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, 29.
[31] Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 2002), 93.
[32] Sheyholislami, *Kurdish Identity, Discourse, and New Media*, 25.
[33] Teun van Dijk, *Elite Discourse and Racism* (London: Sage, 1993), 242.
[34] Hediye Esra Arcan, "Ethnic conflicts and the role of the media: The case of Turkish media", *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 4 no. 10 (2013): 344.
[35] Weiss and Wodak, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, 15.
[36] Bayram Ayaz, *Türk Basını: Türkiye'de İnsan Hakları ve Kürt Sorunu Örneğinde* (İstanbul: Belge, 1997).

the ongoing conflict published in these three newspapers in a one-month period during which the armed attacks and actions gained momentum. CDA was then applied to this sample.

CDA reveals the intricate relationships between text, talk, social cognition, power, society, and culture.[37] In other words, it demystifies texts shaped ideologically by relations of power by focusing on the opaque relationship between discourse and societal structure.[38] It is also a particularly valuable method for studying identity because of its critical and constructionist approach.[39] CDA adopts a critical approach to the object of investigation, as it endeavours to make explicit the power relationships that are frequently hidden. Using the concepts of intertextuality and interdiscursivity, CDA examines the relationships between texts.[40] These two concepts have particular importance for the analysis of news articles and the discourses constructed and disseminated in them.

There are several schools of CDA, which differ according to their theoretical foundations and methodologies. For example, Fairclough's dialectical-relational approach uses an essentially Marxist framework; Van Dijk's socio-cognitive discourse analysis focuses on the interaction between cognition, discourse, and society; the discourse-historical approach focuses on interconnections between texts and discourses in their historical contexts; and the Duisburg School, sometimes referred to as dispositive analysis, argues that it is discourse that makes subjects.[41] Here, I use the discourse-historical approach, pioneered by Ruth Wodak, to analyse the news articles. I select the discourse-historical approach because the Kurdish question has historical roots. As the discourse-historical approach attempts to integrate historical knowledge with the social and political contexts in which discursive events are embedded,[42] it seems an appropriate approach for this research.

Wodak suggests that discourses about nations and national identities rely on at least four types of discursive macro-strategies: constructive, preservative or justificatory, transformative, and destructive. Constructive strategies aim to construct national identities, whereas preservative or justificatory strategies are concerned with their conservation and reproduction.[43] The last two macro-strategies aim to change and dismantle national identities, respectively. The first two discursive macro-strategies suit the present research, which examines the discursive construction of Turkish national identity through otherness categories. These macro-level strategies work in the news stories through micro-level strategies, which might be called discourse-analytical tools. This study examines the use of nomination and argumentation strategies in the sample texts. The nomination strategy deals with the construction of in-groups and out-groups, and the argumentation strategy justifies positive or negative attributions. Specifically, this study considers the construction of categories of otherness through the discursive construction of out-groups, and the use of argumentation strategies to justify this exclusion or othering.

---

[37] Teun van Dijk, "Principles of critical discourse analysis", *Discourse & Society* 4 no. 2 (1993).

[38] Encarnacion Hidalgo-Tenorio, "Critical discourse analysis, an overview", *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 10 no. 1 (2011): 188.

[39] Susan Ainsworth and Cynthia Hardy, "Critical discourse analysis and identity: Why bother?", *Critical Discourse Studies* 1 no. 2 (2004): 246.

[40] Michael Meyer, "Between theory, method, and politics: positioning of the approaches to CDA", in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, eds. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London: Sage, 2001), 15.

[41] Hidalgo-Tenorio, "Critical discourse analysis, an overview", 189-194.

[42] Ruth Wodak, "The discourse-historical approach", in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, eds. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London: Sage, 2001), 65.

[43] Wodak, "The discourse-historical approach", 71-72.

A search of the news articles published in *Hürriyet, Milliyet, and Sabah* between July 26-August 24 of 2015 found 449 news articles (112 in *Hürriyet*, 153 in *Milliyet,* and 184 in *Sabah*) about the conflict.[44] CDA was then used to examine how the discourse strategies of nomination and argumentation were used to (re)construct national identity and otherness categories.

Critical discourse analysis of the news articles

This analysis of the elements of the discourse strategies in the news articles identified five discourse forms: military-legal, national-symbolic, cultural-ethical, dramatic-emotional, and ethnical. Each of these forms is scrutinised below with examples. The author has translated the related parts of the news articles from Turkish to English.

Before presenting the analysis of the articles, it is worth noting the type of discourse typically found in these three newspapers. First, in Turkey, the mainstream media's coverage of national security issues is highly dependent on statements issued by officials such as the prime minister, ministers, military commanders, and senior political party members. Second, the media tends to use a sensational style to attract public attention, especially when it comes to attacks against the security forces by the PKK. This reporting style largely builds on official statements. Accordingly, the newspapers reproduce and reflect the official discourse in their pages, acting as if they are the guards of the established system. They eagerly line up with the state, leaving aside their duty as the Fourth Estate according to the liberal model of mass communication. This attitude is not restricted to the armed conflicts between PKK militants and Turkish security forces. Yüksek, among others, observes the same attitude during the Gezi Park protests of 2013 in Turkey, stating that the mainstream media published news generally based on the political elites' statements. Considering it a general trend in the mainstream media, Yüksek draws attention to the identical headlines on the first pages of many newspapers, which were exactly the same word by word as the prime minister's statement.[45]

The military-legal discourse

The military-legal discourse consists of language expressing all kinds of activities carried out against the armed organisations and unarmed threats that are considered dangers to national security. These activities target the PKK, its supporters and the institutions that are allegedly affiliated with it. Since the PKK's armed actions challenge the state's monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, the language used to construct this form of discourse stresses the legitimacy of the state's activities and the legal basis for them. Frequently used words in this form of discourse to describe military/legal activities against PKK and the parties or civic institutions that are allegedly supporters[46] are 'terrorist', 'separatist', 'treacherous', 'anti-democratic', 'pro-war', and 'violent'.

In the article '*Message received, Kandil hit',* published in *Hürriyet* on 26 July 2015, Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu is quoted as follows:

---

[44] The search of the newspapers' archives was carried out at the İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality's Atatürk Library.

[45] Derya Yüksek, "Alternatif Medya ve Direniş Kültürü: Sosyal Hareketlerde Birleştirici Güç Olarak Alternatif Medya", in *Türkiye'de Alternatif Medya*, eds. Barış Çoban and Bora Ataman (İstanbul: Kafka, 2015), 66.

[46] In the news media, these alleged supporters include the BDP (*Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi*, Peace and Democracy Party), HDP, DBP (*Demokratik Bölgeler Partisi*, Democratic Regions Party), DTK (*Demokratik Toplum Kongresi*, Democratic Society Congress), and HDK (*Halkların Demokratik Kongresi*, Peoples' Democratic Congress).

If someone tried to give us a message by martyring those cops,[47] we got that message, and our planes hit Kandil. Whoever tries to give the same message will pay. The primary purpose of these operations is to protect our democracy. HDP officials continually talk about the state of non-conflict. It is high time for them to decide: Guns or democracy? Violence or peace?

Such statements in the daily newspapers construct violence as the opposite of democracy. The HDP, as a legal party in parliament, is asked to choose between these two options. Although not explicitly expressed, the government asks the HDP to join the ranks of democracy against the PKK, the violent organisation referenced by the code Kandil – a mountainous area in northern Iraq that hosts the PKK's bases and training camps. The article '*Impudent declaration from HDP*' in *Sabah* on the same day states that the operations against the PKK disturbed the HDP. It also states that a joint declaration issued by the party and the co-chairs of the DBP, DTK, and HDK contained expressions threatening the government and security forces. The articles characterise the statements by the HDP and the other institutions about the airstrikes targeting PKK's bases in northern Iraq as 'impudent' and 'threatening'. In contrast, they represent the security operations as legitimate and based on the legal norms universally granted to sovereign states. These are examples of the military-legal discourse. They highlight that the PKK threatens Turkey, and that the military operations will continue against this threat to democracy and freedom in Turkey.

These articles employ the argumentation strategy, since they justify military operations discursively. The air raids are targeting the PKK bases because they threaten Turkey, democracy, freedom, and the lives of citizens. Therefore, the state's security forces must eliminate this threat, and their activities have full legitimacy. Here, the operations' legitimacy is established through indirect expression of the state's obligations. There are also phrases directly expressing this legitimacy in the press release by the Prime Minister's Centre for Coordination, reported on in *Sabah* in the article '*Leadership on target*' on 26 July 2015. The article states that the targeting of the terrorist organisation, the PKK, was a legal measure for defending national sovereignty under international law. It is significant that the press release states that the legitimacy of the operations carried out against the PKK, defined as a terrorist organisation, is based on international law on the defence of national sovereignty. These operations are legitimate because international law includes a state's right of self-defence. Hence the PKK has no legitimacy and is constructed as the 'other' against the Turkish national identity represented by the state.

On 19 August 2015, *Hürriyet* published the statements made by the new Chief of Staff, Hulusi Akar, during the commandership's handover ceremony. The commander describes the government's response to the PKK as follows: "The terrorist actions intend to damage our country and nation's unity, our brotherhood of thousands of years, and the insidious and treacherous attacks against our innocent citizens and security personnel did and will receive the severest and most effective responses".

The general insinuates that the PKK is a legitimate target since it organises insidious and treacherous terrorist actions. Here, the nomination strategy works to discursively construct out-groups. While the nomination strategy works by denoting the PKK and its affiliates as

---

[47] Two policemen were found dead in their shared flat in Ceylanpınar, a district of Şanlıurfa, on 22 July 2015. Each of them was killed with a bullet to the head.

'terror/terrorist', 'treacherous', 'insidious', 'separatist', 'pro-war', and 'anti-democratic' in the news texts, the argumentation strategy works by stressing the legitimacy of the state's actions to eliminate this threat against the nation-state. Through this discourse form, the PKK and its affiliates are constructed as the other against Turkish national identity, which is represented by the general, the nation's unity, citizens, and security personnel.

This critical discourse analysis indicates that the PKK and its so-called affiliates are categorised as the other in the news media by being defined as 'illegitimate'. Turkish national identity, which represents Turkey, the state, the Republic, democracy, legitimacy, and rights and freedoms, is constructed and reinforced by the military-legal discourse that applies this otherness category of 'illegitimacy'.

The national-symbolic discourse

The national-symbolic discourse in the newspaper articles consists of repetitive phrases that represent or evoke the nation. Therefore, it is possible to argue that this form of discourse relies on elements that enable Turks to think of the nation-state as an imagined political community. In the news, this form of discourse is constituted with language such as 'flag', 'Turkish flag', 'coffin covered with the flag', 'homeland', 'citizen', 'nation', and 'national'. Everything referencing the nation or nationalism in the newspaper articles has an affirmative tone. Therefore, the nomination strategy is predominant in the constitution of this discourse form.

Some examples will elaborate this point. An article published in *Sabah* on 26 July 2015 with the headline '*Leadership on target*' reports that according to the Prime Minister's Centre for Coordination, the weapons used in the operation were produced locally with national resources. Another article on the same page, '*Pars from the air, Storms from the land*'[48] states that Turkey hit the intended targets using its domestically manufactured military equipment. An article published in *Sabah* on July 30 about the bombardment of PKK targets in northern Iraq, '*Hitting in the name of Major Aslan*', states that fighter jets dropped bunker-busters developed by the Institute of Research and Development of the Defence Industry of TÜBİTAK (*Türkiye Bilimsel ve Teknik Araştırmalar Kurumu*, Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey). On 24 August 2015, an article in *Sabah*, '*Bombs like rain on traitors*', reports that the operation conducted against the PKK's Haftanin base in northern Iraq used F-16 jets and domestically manufactured Atak helicopters. Phrases such as '*national means*', '*national resources*', and '*domestically manufactured*' contribute to the discursive construction of an in-group, which is consistent with the nomination strategy, and imply that the state's fight against the PKK is not dependent on foreign countries for supplies. The emphasis on 'national' seems critical, since dependence on foreign procurement for national defence implies 'non-national' and points to a potential weakness in the argument that the state is protecting national interests.

For July 29, several newspapers articles about the funeral of the gendarmerie commander Major Aslan Kulaksız contain phrases that contribute to the national-symbolic discourse. The article in *Milliyet*, '*I brought my Lion like lions*', a headline that refers to a Turkish idiom implying bravery, states that Sibel Kulaksız wearing her husband's cap gave a soldier's salute in front of the coffin covered with the Turkish flag, saying '*He is my Lion, the entire nation's Lion, the entire homeland's Lion*'. Wearing the military cap and giving the military salute indicates symbolic

---

[48] Pars and Storms refer, respectively, to F-16 fighter jets and T-155 howitzers.

identification with the army, which also represents the national identity. The words of his wife present the martyred major[49] as a symbol representing the nation and the homeland. Aslan, the major's name, means lion in Turkish, which is the symbol of power and superiority in nature, and it is frequently used in all of the newspaper articles to denote the Turkish nation's bravery. An article in *Sabah* states that Vecdi Gönül, the National Defence Minister and General Abdullah Atay, the Gendarmerie General Commander, attended the funeral at Dönertaş mosque after visiting the house of the martyr's father for the last goodbye. Dursun Kulaksız, the martyr's 21-year-old son, also wore his father's cap during part of the ceremony. Here, by wearing the military cap, the martyred officer's son is identified with the military representing the national identity.

The national-symbolic discourse in the newspapers is constructed with words such as 'Turkish flag', 'soldier's salute', 'military cap', 'homeland', and 'nation', which denote the discursive construction of an in-group following the nomination strategy. Mentioning the minister's and the commander's participation also contributes to the discourse, as both represent the state and the nation. It is noteworthy that martyred security officers' family members exhibit national symbols such as the flag, military caps and uniforms at the funerals. Using national symbols to denote the national identity at these events also contributes to othering those who killed the officers, their organisations and parties.

Thus, the national-symbolic discourse is constructed through language that represents, indicates, and implies the national, and its *sine qua non* symbols and metaphors such as 'flag', 'homeland', 'nation', and 'martyr'. This discourse represents the other as the 'non-national'. That is, the otherness category that is used to reproduce the national identity is 'the non-national'. The PKK is placed in the 'non-national' category because it kills security officers and threatens national unity; the political party, the HDP, is presented as having a close relationship with the 'non-national' PKK. This classification is possible due to the national-symbolic discourse, which is prominent in the newspapers. The PKK and the parties related to it are indirectly coded as illegitimate, because they are presented as the opposite of the homeland, nation, flag, and military. They are discursively constructed as the 'non-national' other.

The cultural- ethical discourse

The cultural-ethical form of discourse relates to a society's cultural and ethical value judgments and is constructed in the newspapers in their discussions of attitudes, behaviours, thoughts, actions, and consequences. The traditional values define what is to be glorified, respected, and blessed or disdained and condemned. Schlesinger considers national cultures as the repository of classification systems and suggests that they make the identification of 'self' and 'other' possible.[50] Therefore, national culture plays a significant role in constructing otherness and otherness categories. This is particularly so in this case study of othering during the intensification of internal conflict in Turkey. In the news media, keywords that are frequently used to constitute the cultural-ethical discourse are 'hero', 'traitor', 'ambush', 'mean', 'inglorious', 'treacherous', 'hitting from behind', and 'bitch'. The positive qualities are attributed to Turkishness, whereas the negative ones are recognized as otherness qualities. The PKK, classified as a terrorist organisation, kills security personnel, even when asleep.

---

[49] When the government officials, soldiers, and police are killed while performing their duties in Turkey, they are called 'martyr'.
[50] Philip Schlesinger, *Media, State, and Nation: Political Violence and Collective Identities* (London: Sage, 1991), 174.

Security personnel are ambushed, hit from behind, and murdered in front of their families. This means that PKK uses methods that are entirely outside of assumed Turkish cultural norms and ethical values. The strategies of nomination and argumentation are used to construct this form of discourse. The sublimated values, such as bravery, heroism, and sacrifice, represent the national identity and accordingly contribute to the discursive construction of an in-group, following the nomination strategy, while terms such as treacherous, coward, and inglorious construct the other's identity as the out-group. The argumentation strategy operates by demonstrating that the actions of the PKK violate cultural and ethical values. For instance, when the news reports that the PKK has killed soldiers in an ambush, it implies treachery and cowardice, since ambushes are traditionally interpreted as a method used by those who do not have enough courage to fight face-to-face. The article '*Treacherous trap with bomb-loaded vehicles*' published in *Milliyet* on 27 July 2015, demonstrates these strategies:

> A bomb-loaded vehicle exploded in Lice, a Diyarbakır district, just as the military vehicle was passing, martyring two soldiers, and wounding four soldiers. The General Staff's statement relating to the attack was as follows: "When our personal arrived at the site, the terrorists detonated the bomb-loaded vehicle and the handmade explosives placed there. The separatist terror organisation treacherously planned them. A Cobra armoured vehicle overturned due to the explosion".

The PKK members, who killed the security personnel, are denominated as 'traitors' and 'separatists'. The PKK fighters are 'treacherous' because they ambush soldiers. The fact that the word 'ambush' points to a military tactic is not important. It is here identified with 'treachery' and the PKK is constructed as the treacherous other against the nationalist martyrs. Discourse works here through the argumentation strategy.

An article about Lahican Kaçar, a 22-year-old pregnant woman, is another striking example of the cultural-ethical discourse. In the article '*Helicopter carrying pregnant woman under fire*', published in *Sabah* on August 2, the story is as follows:

> The Hakkari-Çukurca road was closed due to the detonation of a handmade bomb by PKK terrorists at the Sine Bridge location. Meanwhile, Lacihan Kaçar, who was in labour, could not be taken to the hospital, and citizens asked the soldiers for help. Kaçar was sent to the hospital by a military helicopter. PKK terrorists opened fire to harass the helicopter landing there.

The article states that Kaçar, who faced a risky delivery, was transferred from the hospital in Çukurca to the state hospital in Hakkari but came suddenly face-to-face with death due to the road closure. The army rushed to help her. The units conducted the operation while under fire, managing to conduct a breath-taking rescue. Despite the danger, the helicopter took off and came under fire from the terrorists while in the air. The PKK blocked transportation by destroying the bridge, which put civilians in danger. The roadblock risked the lives of the pregnant woman and her unborn baby. The woman and her baby might have died if the army had not rushed to help her. The PKK opened fire on a helicopter transporting a pregnant woman and tried to prevent the humanitarian aid operation. Here, the armed organisation is an unethical agent, while the Turkish army represents the ethical agent seeking to transfer the pregnant woman to the hospital despite all the difficulties. In the news article, the national

identity represented by the Turkish army is constructed based on the 'unethical' otherness category; the PKK is placed in that category through the argumentation strategy of discourse.

This analysis shows how the PKK is represented as 'unethical' in the news media due to its disregard for society's traditional values. It acts unethically against the 'heroic' and 'brave' individuals who express the national identity by protecting pregnant women. Here, the Turkish national identity is constructed based on opposition to the 'unethical' otherness category.

The dramatic-emotional discourse

The dramatic-emotional discourse is constructed using phrases that appeal to and provoke emotions and strengthen common affective states. The funerals of martyrs provide suitable contexts for poignant and dramatic expressions of emotion. In the news articles, emotional expressions are usually organized around the most emotive words in Turkish society, such as 'family', 'child', 'marriage', 'wedding', and 'pregnancy'. The expressions that build the emotional-dramatic discourse in the sample of news texts in this study are clear examples of sensationalist journalism. Higgins thinks that the media's populist language is related to political populism in today's world.[51] According to Mudde, the spirit of the time is populism, and populist discourse has become mainstream in Western democracies.[52] Furthermore, since internal conflicts are also struggles to form public opinion, it is not surprising that they make populist discourses more prominent in the political sphere. Populism is also promoted through sensationalist reporting styles. The sensationalist reporting of a statement given by Yalçın Akdoğan, the Deputy Prime Minister, exemplifies this. The article '*Akdoğan: HDP back to factory settings*', published in *Milliyet* on 2 August 2015, quotes Akdoğan's words to the HDP about their relationship to the PKK as follows: "Here you let them abuse you. You betrayed the peace process. You know why? Because you act according to the borrowed mind. There is a prompter near you, and it whispers to your ears. The phrases you used are not yours". This constitutes an excellent example of populist political discourse. The headline '*Back to factory settings*' uses a common metaphor to say that although the HDP had acted democratically during the negotiations at İmralı, it was 'back' to acting according to the PKK's orientations in the new period.

The argumentation strategy is dominant in the construction of the dramatic-emotional discourse in the newspapers. The 'other' creates enormous suffering and frustrations, which are reflected in dramatic and emotional phrases. The reason for all this suffering is the 'other' who seeks to martyr 'us', hurt 'us', and act against 'our' national and social values.

The article '*What great pain*', published in *Milliyet* on 3 August 2015, exemplifies the dramatic-emotional discourse. The story about the funeral of 35-year-old specialist sergeant Ali Gökçen, who was killed by a PKK mine, states that his wife, Songül Gökçen (30) and her daughters, 11-year-old Buğra and 3-year-old Azra, burst into tears upon seeing the coffin covered with the flag.

First, it is noteworthy that the headline emphasises suffering. The PKK martyred the soldier, who was married and had two young children, and it made his wife a widow and his children

---

[51] Michael Higgins, "Mediated populism, culture, and media form", *Palgrave Communications* 3 no. 3 (2017): 1.

[52] Cas Mudde, "The populist zeitgeist", *Government and Opposition* 39 no. 4 (2004): 542.

orphans. As the other, the PKK is responsible for all this suffering and irreparable loss, and the national identity is represented by the sufferers.

Numerous dramatic and emotional phrases appear in *Hürriyet, Milliyet,* and *Sabah*'s reporting on the PKK attack in Silopi on August 10. The article *'Mined trap: 4 policemen martyred' in Hürriyet* states, "After the mine attack, the police team of which Süleyman Aydın [the victim's father] is a member rushed to the crime scene. He is said to have contributed to the efforts of taking his son's body out of the demolished vehicle". It continues, "Martyr Savaş Akyol had officially married Fatma Yağar. The couple had distributed the invitation cards for the celebration party on August 23 in Sincan, Ankara". The article in *Milliyet, 'Treacherous trap for police in Silopi: 4 martyrs*' states that the relatives and neighbours of the martyr said that Akyol had rented an apartment, bought the furniture and household appliances, distributed the invitation cards, and that the henna night and wedding party would be on August 22 and 23, respectively.

The quotations from these articles exemplify the construction of the dramatic-emotional discourse. Sentimentality is amplified by details of the preparations for marriage and the victim's father being in the position of removing his son's body from the vehicle hit by the attack. Once again, the PKK and its inhumane actions are the cause of all these sufferings and loss. Here, the national identity of Turkishness is constructed through the use of the otherness category of 'inhumanity' constructed by the dramatic-emotional discourse.

The ethnic discourse

The ethnic discourse in the newspapers is constructed using language that expresses, points to, or implies the otherness of social groups, ethnicities, and geographies considered to be outside the historical, social, and cultural spheres of Turkish identity. This discourse can be constructed in explicit forms such as 'Kurd/Kurds', 'Kurdistan', or 'Kurdish citizens', or through coded language such as 'the region', 'East and South-east', or 'citizens in the region'. Bruinessen argues that the armed conflict has increased the Kurds' awareness of their distinct ethnic identity.[53] Therefore, it is not surprising that the language used by national institutions, especially the state, focuses on national identity. Accordingly, the constructed discourse changes according to the seriousness of the threat and pointing to a different ethnicity becomes a problem from the very moment it is expressed.

The articles *'Terror bases destroyed one by one',* published in *Sabah* on 26 July 2015, makes the following statements in a story about 19 people detained in the town of Aydın: "HDP Aydın Provincial Co-Chair Pınar Akpınar's attitude and statements are surprising. Akpınar, who went to the police station, argued as if being a lawyer that the detainees were innocent. By saying that the region, which she called Kurdistan, was bombed by Turkey, she openly manifested her sympathy for the PKK". The article reports on an air operation by the Turkish Air Force against the PKK bases in northern Iraq. The operation was conducted in a region governed by the Kurdistan Regional Government. The fact that Akpınar called this geographical region 'Kurdistan' makes her a PKK sympathizer in the eyes of the mainstream print media in Turkey. By using the term 'Kurdistan' for the region, she violates the invisible ban imposed by the dominant discourse. The newspaper also implies this is part of the same process through which Akpınar insists on the detainees' innocence. In other words, she exceeds the limits of acceptable discourse. In the news article, the ethnic discourse is

---

[53] Martin van Bruinessen, "Shifting national and ethnic identities: The Kurds in Turkey and the European diaspora", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 18 no. 1 (1998): 50.

constructed by putting the PKK, HDP, and Kurdistan into the same category. This is an example of how the nomination strategy functions in constituting this discourse form.

Another example for the ethnic discourse is the article '*No place for ISIS on the border*', published by *Hürriyet* on July 25. It includes the following statement that Prime Minister Davutoğlu gave in his meeting with the editors-in-chief of the Turkish dailies: *"Since Thursday, I have received so many supportive messages from the East and South-east, thank-you messages, saying 'we wanted to see the state'. The people who remained silent due to the PKK's pressures will speak louder from now and on"*. The article '*Matter of existence for the state*' in *Milliyet* quotes Davutoğlu's statements about the HDP: "They engaged in a two-part game; the first one was to make use of the advantage of the election of 80 MPs in Ankara and Istanbul, and the second was to make use of the PKK's armed presence in the region as an advantage". Thus, according to the head of the AKP government, the people living in the South-east had been silent about the PKK's oppression because of fear but had expressed their support for the state freely since the government had started to take drastic measures against the PKK. Here, the geographical region where the population has a non-Turkish ethnicity is coded as 'East', 'South-east', or 'the region'.

This analysis shows that the discourse in newspaper articles distinguishes Kurdish ethnic identity from Turkish national identity. The discourse on Kurdish identity may be explicit or coded. The PKK, waging an armed struggle against the Turkish state, in which it claims to fight on behalf of the Kurds, and the HDP, which defends the rights of the Kurds and is therefore often accused of being associated with the PKK, prefer the use of open language such as 'Kurd', 'Kurds', and 'Kurdistan', whereas the statements of the officials prefer coded language such as the 'region'. In instances where the word 'Kurd' is used in official statements, the word 'citizen' is often added.

Thus, the ethnic discourse is constructed in the news texts through language that creates the 'non-Turk' otherness category against which the national identity is constructed. In the newspaper articles, almost everything in the 'non-Turk' category is associated with an indicator of Kurdish identity.

Above I identified five forms of discourse used to discursively construct national identity and otherness: military-legal, national-symbolic, cultural-ethical, dramatic-emotional, and ethnic. An analysis of the relative frequency of the words and phrases associated with the different discourse forms identified in 449 news articles shows that the language of the military-legal discourse appears in 76% of them. In other words, the military-legal discourse is the dominant form in the news. Expressions constructing the cultural-ethical discourse appear in 28.7% of the articles, and 16% of the articles contain language of the dramatic-emotional discourse. The last two forms of discourse are almost equally common: they appear in 12.7 % and 12.0% of the articles, respectively. This distribution seems consistent with a period of intensifying conflict. During a period when a strong wave of violence was affecting both urban spaces and rural areas, the discourse takes a form based on the language of violent encounters and is concerned with qualifying such actions as legal or illegal.

Concluding remarks

This study examined how Turkish national identity and the otherness categories it is defined against have been constructed in the mainstream print media's dailies *Hürriyet, Milliyet,* and *Sabah*. It analysed 449 news articles published in a one-month period of intensifying conflict

in 2015. The main results are outlined above. Since all mainstream media in Turkey adopt the same approach to national security issues and use political and military elites' statements as their primary sources, the above examples from the three dailies should give an accurate overview of discourse types and otherness categories in Turkish public discourse in general.

Using the discourse-historical concepts of argumentation and nomination strategies, I find that Turkish national identity is constructed and reinforced through the construction of multiple otherness categories including 'illegitimate', 'non-national', 'unethical', 'inhuman', and 'non-Turk'. These categories are established through five forms of discourse, which can be conceptualized as military-legal, national-symbolic, cultural-ethical, dramatic-emotional, and ethnic discourses, respectively.

If these five discourse categories are treated as streams that feed a river, it is possible to say that some of the forms are stronger or weaker, just as the flow of some streams is stronger or weaker than others. Together, the five streams serve to vigorously construct national identity, just as streams come together to form a river. It seems that political populism, which has become the dominant form of political communication today, plays a vital role in the construction of Turkish national identity in these circumstances, as does sensationalist journalism. The fact that all three newspapers in this study directly convey statements uttered by politicians and military personnel who use populist political language and use sensational and emotion-provoking phrases for headlines, is consistent with a sensational journalism style. In other words, the use of populist language by the print media and politicians facilitates the discursive construction of otherness categories. Due to this othering process, social tensions inevitably increase and provide a fertile ground for exacerbating ethnic-based conflict, creating a difficult environment for peace initiatives.

This study is limited to a one-month period of intensifying conflict. It would be valuable to conduct a study of discourse forms and otherness categories in the print media during peace negotiations. Such research would enable us to determine how external conditions affect the discourse forms and otherness categories on which Turkish national identity is constructed and consolidated. I expect that the construction of national identity and otherness categories would be less explicit in other periods. This research could contribute to conflict-resolution initiatives, as resolution processes need a climate of mutual understanding and compromise, and the media could play an affirmative role in this process by avoiding the sensationalist reporting style. This article also draws attention to the relevance of news media discourses to peaceful cohabitation in multi-ethnic societies.

Acknowledgments

References

Ainsworth, Susan, and Cynthia Hardy. "Critical discourse analysis and identity: Why bother?," *Critical Discourse Studies* 1 no. 2 (2004): 225-59.

Aktürk, Şener. *Regimes of Ethnicity and Nationhood in Germany, Russia, and Turkey.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Ali, Othman. "The Kurds and the Lausanne peace negotiations, 1922-23," *Middle Eastern Studies* 33 no. 3 (1997): 521-34.

Arcan, Hediye Esra. "Ethnic conflicts and the role of the media: The case of Turkish media", *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 4 no. 10 (2013): 338-46.

Ayaz, Bayram. *Türk Basını: Türkiye'de Insan Hakları ve Kürt Sorunu Örneğinde.* Istanbul: Belge, 1997.

Bakan, Ronay. "Socio-spatial dynamics of contentious politics: A case of urban warfare in the Kurdish region of Turkey", *Kurdish Studies* 8 no. 2 (2020): 245-70.

Beşikçi, İsmail. *Devletlerarası Sömürge Kürdistan.* İstanbul: Alan, 1999.

Billig, Michael. *Banal Nationalism.* London: Sage, 2002.

Bozaslan, Hamit. *La question kurde: États et minorités au Moyen-Orient.* Paris: Tallandier, 2013.

Bruinessen, Martin van. *Agha, Shaikh, and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan.* London: Zed Press, 1992.

———. "Shifting national and ethnic identities: The Kurds in Turkey and the European diaspora", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 18 no. 1 (1998): 39-52.

Chaliand, Gerard, ed. *People without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan.* Translated by Michael Palis. London: Zed Press, 1980.

Çandar, Cengiz. *Turkey's Mission Impossible: War and Peace with the Kurds.* Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020.

Erdem, Derya. "The representation of the Democratic Society Party (DTP) in the mainstream Turkish media", in *The Kurdish Question in Turkey*, eds. Cengiz Gunes and Welat Zeydanlıoğlu, 47-66. New York: Routledge, 2014.

Ersanlı, Büşra, Günay Göksu Özdoğan, Nesrin Uçarlar. *Türkiye Siyasetinde Kürtler: Direniş, Hak Arayışı, Katılım.* Istanbul: İletişim, 2012.

Fairclough, Norman, and Ruth Wodak. "Critical discourse analysis," in *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*, ed.Teun van Dijk, 258-84. London: Sage, 1997.

Foucault, Michel. *L'ordre du discours.* Paris: Gallimard, 1971.

Hidalgo-Tenorio, Encarnacion. "Critical discourse analysis, an overview", *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 10 no. 1 (2011): 183-210.

Higgins, Michael. "Mediated populism, culture, and media form", *Palgrave Communications* 3 no. 3 (2017): 1-5.

İçduygu, Ahmet, David Romano, İbrahim Sirkeci. "The ethnic question in an environment of insecurity: The Kurds in Turkey", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22 no. 6 (1999): 991-1010.

Kirişci, Kemal, and Gareth M. Winrow. *The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-State Ethnic Conflict.* London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004.

MacDowall, David. *A Modern History of the Kurds.* London: I. B. Tauris, 2007.

Meyer, Michael. "Between theory, method, and politics: Positioning of the approaches to CDA", in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, eds. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, 14-32. London: Sage, 2001.

Mudde, Cas. "The populist zeitgeist," *Government and Opposition* 39 no. 4 (2004): 541-63.

O'Connor, Francis Patrick. "Radical political participation and the internal Kurdish diaspora in Turkey", *Kurdish Studies* 3 no. 2 (2015): 151-71.

Schlesinger, Philip. *Media, State, and Nation: Political Violence and Collective Identities.* London: Sage, 1991.

Schoon, Eric W. "Building legitimacy: Interactional dynamics and the popular evaluation of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Turkey", *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 28 no. 4-5 (2017): 734-54.

Sezgin, Dilara, and Melisa A. Wall. "Constructing the Kurds in the Turkish press: A case study of *Hürriyet* newspaper", *Media, Culture & Society* 27 no. 5 (2005): 787–98.

Sheyholislami, Jaffer. *Kurdish Identity, Discourse, and New Media.* New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011.

Talbot, Mary. *Media Discourse: Representation and Interaction.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007.

Tol, Gönül. "Turkey's endgame in Syria", *Foreign Affairs* (2019). Available at https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2019-10-09/turkeys-endgame-syria (last accessed on 2-10-2022).

Türkmen, Gülay. *Under the Banner of Islam.Turks, Kurds, and the Limits of Religious Unity.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.

Ünlü, Barış. *Türklük Sözleşmesi: Oluşumu, İşleyişi ve Krizi.* Ankara: Dipnot, 2018.

Ünver, Hamid Akın. *Turkey's Kurdish Question. Discourse and Politics since 1990.* New York: Routledge, 2015.

Van Dijk, Teun. *Elite Discourse and Racism.* London: Sage, 1993.

———. "Principles of critical discourse analysis", *Discourse & Society* 4 no. 2 (1993): 249-83.

Weiss, Gilbert, and Ruth Wodak. *Critical Discourse Analysis.* New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007.

Wodak, Ruth. "The discourse-historical approach", in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, eds. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, 63-94. London: Sage 2001.

Wodak, Ruth, Rudolf de Cillia, Martin Riesigl, Karin Liebhart. *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*. Translated by Angelika Hirsch, Richard Mitten, J. W. Unger. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009.

Yayman, Hüseyin. *Şark Meselesinden Demokratik Açılıma: Türkiye'nin Kürt Sorunu Hafızası*. Ankara: SETA, 2011.

Yeğen, Mesut. *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu*. Istanbul: İletişim, 1999.

———. *Müstakbel Türk'ten Sözde Vatandaşa: Cumhuriyet ve Kürtler*. Istanbul: İletişim, 2014.

———. "Turkish nationalism and the Kurdish question", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30 no. 1 (2007): 119-51.

Yeğen, Mesut, Uğraş Ulaş Tol, Mehmet Ali Çalışkan. "Ethnicity and elections in eastern Turkey: What do the Kurds want?", *Contemporary Review of the Middle East* 7 no. 4 (2020): 446–63.

Yüksek, Derya. "Alternatif Medya ve Direniş Kültürü: Sosyal Hareketlerde Birleştirici Güç Olarak Alternatif Medya", in *Türkiye'de Alternatif Medya*, eds. Barış Çoban and Bora Ataman, 53-78. Istanbul: Kafka, 2015.